

CENTRAL AMERICA/EL SALVADOR: EARTHQUAKE

18 January 2001

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situation report no. 2
period covered: 16 - 17 January 2001*

The Salvadorean Red Cross Society (SRC) continues to provide support in search and rescue, first aid, blood and ambulance services and tracing. A total of 17,905 families in 43 communities have received relief items distributed by the National Society including blankets, kitchen sets, hygiene sets and plastic sheeting. 130 temporary shelters have been established, currently accommodating an estimated 50,000 people made homeless by the landslides triggered by the earthquake and after shocks. The government has requested the SRC to take on a prominent role in the management of shelters, ensure coordination of relief supplies to shelters and to take responsibility for health care. Assessments are underway and teams are accessing remote locations; results of surveys are currently being compiled. Major concerns relate to the damage to water supply infrastructure. 40% of the affected population has no access to clean drinking water or sanitation. It is clear that medium and long term needs far exceed initial expectations.

The context

A major earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale occurred off the coast of El Salvador on Saturday, 13 January 2001 at 11:33 am local time (17:33UTC). The epicentre of the earthquake was located at latitude 12.8 degrees north, longitude 88.8 degrees west, or about 105 km south-south east of the capital, San Salvador.

The earthquake caused major damage in the departments of San Miguel, Santa Ana, La Libertad, La Paz and San Salvador. The worst affected area is the neighbourhood of “Las Colinas” in the suburbs of Santa Tecla/Nueva San Salvador, where the earthquake triggered a landslide covering an estimated 400 houses entirely in mud.

Latest events

The search for those trapped in mudslides continues, but hope of finding survivors is dwindling. Attention is now shifting to the immediate needs of the survivors, many of whom are without shelter, food, water and sanitation. The number of homeless families is now estimated at over 60,000, but there are fears that this number may increase significantly.

The scale of the impact becomes clearer as damage assessments are continuing. The death toll has risen considerably, reaching 681, and is expected to rise even further as many people are still missing. An estimated 66,170 houses have been damaged, of which 24,759 have been completely destroyed. A total of 130 temporary shelters have been set up, with over 10,000 persons in the Cafetalón macro-shelter alone.

More than 500 aftershocks have been registered, with at least 4 reaching a magnitude of more than 5.0 on the Richter scale. Some have caused further damage and many people are afraid to return to their houses, preferring to spend the night in the street instead. Some aftershocks have triggered new landslides, especially in the Tinalca area.

Official figures on the impact of the disaster are summarised in the table below:

	Dead	Injured	Evacuated	Houses damaged	Public buildings damaged	Shelters in operation
Global figures	681	2,115	45,857	66,170 (destroyed: 24,759)	271	130 (estimated 50,000 people)

Source: Salvador RC / COEN

Last updated: Wednesday 17 January, 21:00

Health authorities have expressed concern about possible outbreaks of rota virus, which had led to a yellow alert in the week before the disaster struck. Massive campaigns with medical brigades visiting communities have been interrupted because of the earthquake.

There has been a great deal of structural damage to water supply networks and pumping stations. Danger of cross contamination is high (sewage mixing with drinking water), increasing the risks of outbreaks of diseases. An estimated 40% of the affected population has no access to drinking water or sanitary facilities at present.

The Ministry of Health reports that 1,300 hospital beds are not functioning, but it is expected that half of these will be available in three days. It has also confirmed that the country can cope with the hospital needs.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Salvadorean Red Cross Society/Federation •

Although the hopes of finding survivors are diminishing by the hour, search and rescue efforts are expected to continue for another 3-4 days.

Ambulance services, the blood bank and Red Cross clinics continue to operate around the clock. Field assessments will provide more accurate information on morbidity, as well as on potential needs for drug supplies and medical equipment.

The SUMA supplies management system has been activated in order to track all goods received at various locations including the international airport. All incoming goods are classified and stored in central warehouses for onward distribution.

Needs assessments were concluded in 43 of the most affected communities. Results will form the basis for the plan of action for the next phase.

The National Society is providing assistance in the areas of search and rescue, ambulance services, first aid, health and care. Furthermore, the distribution of relief items to disaster victims has been stepped up over recent days. So far, a total of 17,905 families in 43 communities have received relief items including blankets, kitchen sets, hygiene sets and plastic sheeting. A preliminary distribution report as of the afternoon of 17 January is presented below:

Salvadorean Red Cross Society - Distribution Report

Location	Families	People attended	Food parcel	Water	Kitchen set	Shelter	Hygiene kit	Bedding	Sanitary kit
Santa Elena	4,000	20,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Alegria	1,700	8,500	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	1,700
San Augustin	850	4,250	850	850	850	850	850	850	850
Ereguayquin	670	3,350	670	670	670	670	670	670	670
Tecaluca	1,120	5,600	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120
San Vicente	1,750	8,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750
Comasagua	2,500	12,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Talnique	1,125	5,625	1,125	1,125	1,125	1,125	1,125	1,125	1,125
Jayaque	1,690	8,450	1,690	1,690	1,690	1,690	1,690	1,690	1,690
Chiltupian	2,500	12,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
TOTAL	17,905	89,525	17,905	17,905	17,905	17,905	17,905	17,905	17,905

There are significant needs in the district of Usulután where the SRC plans to provide assistance to 7,220 families, in San Vicente with 2,870 beneficiaries and in La Libertad where 17,905 families are in need.

The SRC also provided large tents to the majority of hospitals which have been damaged, where operations are being conducted in temporary areas outside the hospital premises, for fear of further damage by aftershocks.

The SRC has been officially requested by the MoH to take responsibility for the coordination of relief to all 130 temporary shelters, focusing on the areas of basic health care, water and sanitation, psychological support and food assistance. The government remains formally responsible for the administration of the shelters, including registration and allocation of those affected. A committee consisting of representatives of the MoH, SRC, PAHO, the Federation and the American Red Cross will coordinate with other agencies concerned as regards the distribution of relief goods.

Details of temporary shelters per department are summarised below:

<i>Department</i>	<i>Number of temporary shelters</i>
San Salvador	17
La Libertad	33
Santa Ana	15
San Sonate	14
San Vicente	5
Ahuachapan	17
Cuscatlan	1
La Paz	5
Usulután	1
Morazan	3
La Unión	4
Cabañas	3
San Miguel	1
Others	11
TOTAL	130

More than 1,000 volunteers continue to be involved in all aspects of the relief operation.

The Federation's team in San Salvador continues to support the Salvadorean Red Cross Society in the coordination of its relief activities, liaison with the authorities, Red Cross partners and other donors, as well as with the media. Daily co-ordination meetings are held with SRC and PNS. All PNS have expressed their desire to work in a coordinated approach with the Federation in supporting the SRC which is leading the operation.

The Federation FACT team in San Salvador was completed on 16 January and, together with PADRU members, the following areas of expertise are covered: relief (Spanish Red Cross), information (Finnish Red Cross), relief coordination (Colombia Red Cross), team leader and logistics (Federation Secretariat). In addition, the region benefits from a relief/DP delegate, a health coordinator, a water and sanitation delegate, a regional information delegate, and a development delegate.

An air evaluation was conducted on the morning of 18 January, thanks to the support of Ericsson which provided a helicopter to the Federation FACT team. As a result, a detailed assessment of the situation and of human, financial and material needs will be completed shortly. Together with field assessments conducted by SRC, this will provide the basis for the plan of action for the next phase of the relief operation, as well as for the full appeal. Assistance will be provided to the disaster victims following adherence to the SPHERE standards.

The logistics delegate has been providing support as regards the handling of relief goods arriving at the international airport and ensuring the tracking of all in-kind donations received.

The Guatemala regional delegation continues to provide technical, logistical, and finance/administration support. Its regional website provides up to date information and background articles, as well as appeals, sitreps and news stories in spanish and english. More than 3,400 hits were registered in the 3 days following the earthquake, compared to an average 100 per day. More information can be found at: <http://www.cruzrojahumanidad.org>

The website also hosts a bulletin board where it is possible to post or search for messages. Any requests for tracing arriving here are relayed to the SRC tracing office.

Information on how to donate on-line or to a dedicated bank account has been included.

Red Cross partners •

An ICRC tracing delegate will join the Federation team on 18 January in order to provide technical support to tracing activities which have been initiated, and of 85 cases undertaken, 12 have been resolved. Activities will be further developed in close cooperation with the SRC and other PNS with technical expertise in the area. An ICRC vehicle has arrived to support the operation. The high number of international delegates who are arriving as a result of bilateral initiatives has put considerable strain on the operating capacity of the SRC, and effective coordination is becoming more challenging.

Outstanding needs

As more detailed information of the impact of the disaster has become available, it is clear that the short, medium and long term needs will be higher than initially anticipated.

The government of El Salvador has requested the Salvadorean Red Cross Society to assume a prominent role in the management of shelters. Other areas on which the SRC intends to focus assistance are: food and non-food relief, water and sanitation interventions and provision of temporary shelter.

As a result of the decision of 18 January that the National Society will take on considerable responsibility for the temporary shelters, the plan of action drawn up is currently under revision. Therefore, the Federation will launch a full appeal together with a budget revision shortly, once the plan of action has been finalised.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The SRC continues its close coordination with the authorities and other disaster management services through the National Emergency Response Centre (COEN). In addition, there have been various meetings with government departments and Ministries.

UNDP hosted a meeting on 17 January which was attended by more than 30 NGOs. Coordination and exchange of information were encouraged.

The World Food Programme has proposed that SRC collaborate in its emergency food distribution and this proposal is currently being studied.

A working committee consisting of members of SRC, the Federation and OXFAM is preparing a joint plan of action. Activities will initially focus on distribution of water, waste management and basic sanitation in temporary shelters, as well as in some small communities in rural areas which have received no support so far.

An inter-agency meeting including NGOs will take place in the next few days and will focus on water and sanitation issues.

A co-ordination meeting with the Ministry of Health, PAHO (the Pan American Health Organisation), the Salvadorean Red Cross Society, the Federation, the American Red Cross and other agencies, took place on 16 January. The Ministry of Health has defined its emergency health strategy focusing on the following seven priority areas:

- epidemiological surveillance.
- specific attention to water borne and vector borne diseases such as dengue fever.
- evaluation of infrastructure.
- medical care services.
- water and sanitation.
- health promotion.
- communication and emergency resource management.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Ericsson has provided the essential communications and search and rescue tools to the Salvadorean Red Cross Society in the context of the Ericsson Response Programme including 8 generators, 5 pick-up vehicles, 12 cellular 'phones, 10 metal cutters, 300 spades and 300 hatchets.

The American Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, German Red Cross, French Red Cross, Colombian Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross and the Italian Red Cross have made both cash and in-kind contributions and have also deployed representatives to El Salvador to assist in the relief initiatives.

Conclusion

It is clear from the results available from the assessments carried out by the SRC that as a result of the devastation caused by the earthquake, needs are considerably higher than anticipated. As a first priority, the homeless are provided with accommodation in temporary shelters. There are fears that, given damage to the water supply infrastructure, disease may spread rapidly. A full appeal to meet the needs defined in the assessments currently being conducted will be launched shortly.

Peter Rees-Gildea
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This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

Central America / El Salvador, earthquake						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 02/2001 Prelim.		PLEDGES RECEIVED			01/18/01	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				1,112,360		TOTAL COVERAGE 100.9%
CASH CARRIED FORWARD						
BRITISH - GOVT (DFID)		98,039	GBP	242,156	16.01.01	EARMARKING TO BE SPECIFIED
CANADIAN - RC		70,000	CAD	77,112	16.01.01	
CANADIAN - RC		150,000	CAD	165,240	17.01.01	
FINNISH - RC		43,729	EUR	65,773	15.01.01	
ICELANDIC - RC		1,000,000	ISK	19,411	15.01.01	
IRISH - RC		20,000	IEP	38,190	16.01.01	
JAPANESE - RC				37,000	16.01.01	
KOREA, REPUBLIC - RC				30,000	17.01.01	
NORWEGIAN - RC		250,000	NOK	46,350	18.01.01	
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		600,000	SEK	104,580	15.01.01	
TURKISH - RC				50,000	17.01.01	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				875,812	CHF	78.7%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
NETHERLANDS - RC		360,489	NLG	246,015	16.01.01	EMERGENCY HEALTH KITS, GENERATORS, DISPENSARY TENTS, FAMILY TENTS, REINF. PLASTIC SHEETING, JERRY CANS, KITCHEN SETS
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				246,015	CHF	22.1%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PSV507						